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SUBJECT: DART NORTHERN IRAQ UPDATE

SUMMARY

1. DART Field Team North reports that there have been several violent incidents in Kirkuk with reports of several deaths. More Kurds are returning to villages in the Makhmur region, and there is little public infrastructure to support major influxes of returnees. WFP will begin receiving 136,000 MT of bulk wheat, in 5,000 MT increments, from stocks in Syria. WFP has requested MOT assistance in locating storage space for the wheat. End Summary

SECURITY

2. Two non-governmental organization (NGO) vehicles were attacked on the Kirkuk to Baghdad road on 15 May. In an apparent act of banditry, shots were fired at one of the vehicles. The vehicle sustained damage, but no one was hurt.

3. Between 16 and 18 May, fighting between Arabs and Kurds took place in Kirkuk. The reasons are still unclear, but some suggest that Ba'ath loyalists attacked Kurds. Several people were injured or killed. An incident over land issues in the Sinjara area west of Mosul left one Arab dead. Coalition forces arrested the suspects.

4. Many Kurds who were forced out of their homes in past years by the former regime are now trying to return to Kirkuk city. Kirkuk epitomizes the ethnic mix and potential for conflict in Iraq and how the return issue is addressed could have profound effects on inter-ethnic relations in the region.

RURAL WATER SECTOR MEETING

5. The Minister of Reconstruction and Development (MORAD) in Arbil hosted a rural water sector meeting on 18 May. In an attempt to solicit assistance from the NGO and international organization communities, the Ministry presented its 2003 plan to implement 103 renovation projects and 112 new projects. These projects do not include proposed activities in the "newly liberated" areas of southern Arbil Governorate.

DART VISIT TO MAKHMUR REGION

6. On 19 May, DART Field Team North visited villages in southern Arbil governorate. The DART met with local villagers, newly arrived returnees, and Coalition representatives responsible for operations in the region.

7. More Kurds are returning to villages in the region, and there is little public infrastructure to support major influxes of returnees. Water supply appears to be an issue, although in the villages visited there were hand-dug wells that could be easily cleaned to provide accessible water.

8. Ethnic tensions are escalating in villages near the old "green line". Historically these villages had a mix of Kurds and Arabs. In the village of Shamamak, the DART met with Arabs who said that on 17 May a local Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP) peshmerga commander from Gwer (who is actually from Shamamak) had come to them with four armed men and told them they must leave the village. The Arabs fear that without Coalition intervention in the next few days, they would have to move to Mosul.

9. The DART visited Coalition forces in Makhmur to discuss this incident. A Coalition source said the incident would be followed up on. He also said that this sort of incident was becoming increasingly common.

10. At Grd Graw, near the border with Ninawa governorate, Kurdish returnees informed the DART that water supplies, usually piped from Haji Ali in Ninawa, had been disrupted. They blamed remaining Ba'athists in that area for their lack of water. The DART has not confirmed whether there is indeed something sinister causing the disruption of water supplies, or if there is a simple mechanical problem. The DART will follow up on this with Coalition authorities in Makhmur.

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE

11. The DART and a U.N. World Food Program (WFP) representative met on 18 May with the manager of the Ninawa Grain Board in Mosul. The meeting was held to explain that WFP was going to begin receiving 136,000 metric tons (MT) of bulk wheat, in 5,000 MT increments, from stocks in Syria, and to request Ministry of Trade (MOT) assistance in locating storage space for the wheat. The manager assured WFP that he would meet with regional silo managers to ensure space. Storage space in Mosul is limited, but regional silos are available to store some of the stock. On a 19 May visit to Makhmur, the DART met a Kurd and two Arabs who were surveying fields of wheat and barley. They explained that the Kurd, a doctor now practicing in Arbil, owned approximately 1,000 dunam (1 dunam equals 2500 square feet) near the village of Nogharan, and that the Arabs had each rented 120 dunam from another Arab who had been given the land sometime in the 1990s. The doctor and the two Arabs were in the process of agreeing how to split the harvest, this in accordance with a recent edict from Mosul, Arbil, Makhmur, and Coalition authorities. The doctor was not pleased with the situation, though he was relieved to be back on his land. However, he was committed to following the agreement to the letter. The Arabs, from Mosul, seemed happy to be receiving anything. All in all, the split appeared to be a good, short-term solution to bring the harvest in successfully.

DART-FUNDED NGO ACTIVITIES IN NORTHERN IRAQ

12. The International Rescue Committee (IRC) met with the DART on 20 May and presented a concept paper for activities in northern Iraq. IRC staff then traveled to Baghdad to meet with colleagues from southern Iraq to finalize implementation plans that will be submitted in the coming days. Possible activities include waste collection, sewer network cleansing, and water treatment plant repairs in the Kirkuk area.

13. The International Medical Corps is re-equipping and renovating four health centers in Kirkuk that were looted following the war.

14. Mercy Corps International (MCI) is providing short-term assistance to the Directorate of Water and Sewerage in Kirkuk. MCI will assist the Directorate with transportation for staff and testing equipment. MCI is also providing short-term emergency assistance to the water treatment plant in Khaniqeen, Diyala governorate, and they are also providing two emergency Health Kits to health facilities in Tekef and Ain Sifni, near Mosul.

15. Save the Children (SCF) has several active projects in Mosul. They are providing transportation for health workers to and from hospitals and primary health care centers; gasoline, cooking gas, cleaning supplies and emergency repairs for Al Khansa and Al Atheer hospitals; and supplies for supplementary feeding programs at those two hospitals.

IDPS AND LAND TENURE

16. The DART visited a small camp for internally displaced persons (IDPs) on the outskirts of Mosul where eleven families have taken shelter near an abandoned Iraqi army base that is now used by the Coalition. While at the camp, the DART learned that children had discovered unexploded ordnance while playing in a nearby field. Coalition forces were immediately notified, and they promptly removed the ordnance.

17. Land tenure issues appear to be heating up with the population perceiving little movement on this issue from the U.S. Government. An estimated eighty percent of the issues are complex but not difficult if a date can be agreed to for the last reasonable Iraqi law and if the registered land system has not been tampered with, as indicated by most local leaders. There will be cases that will need to be worked out in the courts and/or require the involvement of local traditional leaders.

18. Coalition forces in Mosul are involved in the sale of houses (USD 1,000 per unit) in Domiz, which was previously Kurdish land. The houses were built by the former regime. The Coalition objective is to have an integrated community with 200 Kurdish families and 600 Arab families.

